

The Formation of Sensual Synesthesia Abilities in Contemporary Art Education

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Abstract

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Today it is the necessary to change art education for the formation synesthetic sensibility of the artist. This ability is the condition for creation and perception of art work on the new polymorphic artistic languages.

To difference the uniqueness of synesthetic sensuality in compare with traditional aesthetical sensuality in fine or modern art, to trace the relationship between new synesthetic sensuality and new artistic languages, and to elaborate new techniques of art education for formation new artistic sensibility are the purposes of study today.

For such complex problem it is rightly use following methods. The philosophy-aesthetical method allows find out the essence and uniqueness of synesthetic sensuality. The aesthetic-psychological method lets describe the connections between new sensibility and new artistic languages. The problem-pedagogical method permits elaborate new techniques of art education for formation new artistic sensuality for adequate creation and interpretation of art.

The essence and uniqueness of synesthetic sensuality is in ability to create and percept the art work used to supersensuous and super high-speed multimedia for multi-sensual, multi-dimensional and multi-valued realization of art world. Today the language of each art form absorbs and synthesizes the languages of other arts, creating a new polymorphic language of artistic expression.

New techniques of art education for formation new artistic sensibility consist in developing not only the one specific fine art language, but of all languages of arts and models of its combinations.

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Keywords: Synesthetic sensuality; contemporary artistic languages; techniques of art education; new artistic sensibility.



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In the culture of XXI century, the pedagogical sciences have tried to deal with the extraordinarily necessity to transform the learning environment creatively, especially in the area of art education. The main purpose of such environment consists in not only providing knowledge about art history, theory and practice, but also in the formation of conditions for the development of artists who create in the new social and cultural conditions brought by the information society. In other words, today it is the necessary to change art education and aim towards the development of a new synesthetic sensuality.

As a result, The IT society needs to elaborate new concepts in art education in accordance with the ongoing processes of a changing culture and society. These processes are closely connected with the relations between man and society, cultural values and arts that are present in the conditions and embody their different art practices. The essence of sensual synesthesia in this new stage of art and culture and the pedagogical methods and techniques needed for its formation are the focus of this paper.

Since second part of the XX century, the problem of art perception rose to its full height in the culture of postmodernism, a response to the waves of WWII destruction that hit humankind. This process has been reflected in the transformed system of aesthetic values, art languages, relations between the arts and audiences. Postmodern art represents a person in a new culture and is confirmed by the dominance of deconstruction, absurdity and just ugliness. The continuation of these trends is reflected not only in destroying previously existing aesthetic forms, but in the deconstruction of perception. For instance, intolerance, aggression, coarse naturalism and antisocial behavior are represented by this art paradigm. These have led to the inability and unwillingness of the public to empathize with the artistic world. This has ultimately resulted in a crisis of sensuality, manifested either as a complete lack of the necessary responses to the artistic artifact, or a roll over feelings and as appearance of non-aesthetic reaction to the artwork. In the fine arts, perception is strongly connected with the feeling of beauty and aesthetic pleasures emanating from the art form. Contemporary art products and its forms usually bring about surprise and bewilderment as the main feelings on the perceiver, and almost never aesthetic pleasure. All of these processes have a negative impact on the art as a social and communicative system, especially on the sensual elements of this system.

Many artworks on display at exhibitions, concerts, and galleries do not foster sensual perception and limit such process to the sphere of rationality. Rational perception by “head” and intellectual appeal of artistic concepts dominate in the perception process in contemporary artworks. Many contemporary artworks are perceived as riddles and puzzles. Contemporary art is characterized by the peculiarity of its aesthetic essence in the form of “mind games”. In other words, contemporary art has a new language, cultivates a new sensibility, and promotes the incorporation of man to the controversial cultural world. Simultaneously, contemporary art, as its main obvious advantage, tries to represent a new expression of the world. It involves the inhabitant in the process of art perception against his will and desires. To this end, various forms of art and ways of artistic expression have become a synthesis between themselves.

In reference to the psychological aspects of art history, it should be noted that the arts solve the problem of humanization of man and the cultivation of human feelings since their inception. As the morphological art theory and the famous Russian aesthetician Moesha Kagan told us, for long the art

history has been closely connected with the processes of art differentiation. New and new arts and genres have arisen in the history of art together with the processes of differentiation in art languages such as those of the human body, the human voice and human visual signs. The differentiation has been determined also by the appearance of new musical instruments, creation of new painting techniques, the development of views about space, gesture and line in sculpture and in dances. They have been the means for more complete searching processes in pursue of an accurate realization of the difficult and hardly perceptible “dialectics of the soul”. H. Cohen considers artistic creation as the creation of feelings (Cohen H., 1912). L. Vygotsky, similarly, understands the arts as processes of “smart feelings” development (Vygotsky L., 1925). Man experiences changes in the world in different ways at each stage of the cultural history. Art tries to externalize the features of the world experience in an era of changes.

The problem of a new art sensibility is nowadays actively discussed within the field of contemporary non-classical aesthetics. For instance, the last Congress of the International Association of Aesthetics “Aesthetics and Mass Culture” which took place in Seoul, South Korea in July, 2016 dedicated the a round table session to ‘The role of the non-visual in contemporary art: taste, smell, kinesthesia, and touch’ (Wiseman M., 2016, p.35). The causes and nature of the non-free aesthetic sensuality typical of classical art, are a case is made though the subvention of beauty by appropriating and distorting the capacities of human sensibility in four ways: through gastronomic co-operation as well as technological and emotional co-optation. By appropriating, controlling, and limiting the capacities of human sensibility, these forms of co-optation undermine the free sensibility that is the heart of aesthetic pleasure, thus subverting the possibilities of aesthetic appreciation» (Berleant A. 2016, p.183).

The *synesthetic* art orientation was born within the Romanticism culture. It comprises the idea of the internal art synthesis in one work (Gesamtkunstwerk) as revealed in the Richard Wagner’s works and his opera masterpieces and was actively deployed on the threshold the XX century. Theoretical and creative works by abstract art V. Kandinsky contain the thesis on the multivalent colors influence on the perception the painting (Kandinsky, 1911). In his key work *About the Noetic in Art*, V. Kandinsky regards painting as a poly-sensory art where the main mean of expression is inter-sensory association. At the same time, he asserts there is a “color hearing” and tactile feelings: prickly or smooth, warm or cold, and famous “perfumed paints” (V.Kandinsky, 1911, 24-26). Abstract painting renounces the direct reproduction of the visible world and makes use of the images synesthesia and its perception to grasp the world in its first inexpressible depth.

S. Eisenstein, studying the law of “vertical mounting”, along with the traditional synesthetic concept in cinematography, introduced a new concept: synaesthesia defined it as the ability to “bring together all the various sensations brought by from different areas in different senses, as a phenomenon of “commensurate unity” (S. Eisenstein, 336). The etymology of the word “synaesthesia” – “syn plus aesthesis”, i.e. “co-sensation”, “co-feeling” as well as “co-presentation” and even “sense”, treats the root base of the word “Sense” (English) as “touch”, “the sensitive” (Galeev B., 1987, 104).

Russian psychological synesthesia studies can be traced back to more than a century as the work by N. Kovalevsky (1884), and by M. Bekhterev (1896) demonstrate. At the beginning of XX century, L.

Vygotsky, and then his pupil, A. Luria continued these studies. According to Vygotsky, the concept involves an active “emotional connection” that internally defines the productive nature of “combining fantasy” in the construction of “unprecedented” synesthetic images. These are formed in defiance of formal logics, but according to the feeling and mood (Vygotsky, 1925).

Since middle of the XX century A. Luria who continued such studies defined synesthesia as the appearance of feeling a certain modality under the influence of a different stimulus modality, as an interaction form between the senses and their work (Luria A., 108). Contemporary psychology discusses the synesthetic phenomenon as a complex of psychological correlates (subjective equivalence, contemplation) of color, sound, words, shapes and tactile, gustatory and olfactory sensations (Lupenko E., 2005, 11).

Some in the scientific community understand synesthesia exclusively as an inherent phenomenon. They believe it is an involuntary psychological reaction, which has the character of a “co-sensation” not directly caused by the physical properties of objects and phenomena in reality, but only by a combination of incentive character (Gutowic R., Eagleman D., 2009).

Since the 1970s, synesthesia has become the subject of interest and art activity in Russian aesthetics. Bulat Galeev made it the subject of his research and study when he was the first who presented the synesthetic performative practices (Galeev B., 1987). With the aim to develop synesthesia studies, he organized the scientific center “Prometheus” in Kazan. He argues in his research that the synesthetic images by A. Scriabin and N. Rimsky-Korsakov were not anomalies, but forms of non-verbal emotional thinking and have artistic and intellectual nature. Together with the staff members of “Prometheus” center, I. Vanechkina and B. Abdulin, B. Galeev conducts comprehensive analysis of color-musical-poetic synesthesia (cit).

In the analysis of the synesthetic phenomenon in the methodology of ontological ideas about art and arts languages, the main philosophic and aesthetic idea related to the authors’ conception of art education is that “our reality (or at least its human experience) is always linguistically given”. The “ontological textualism” that “views the entire world as text” (Shusterman R., 565, 2009), is our key point.

The contemporary American aesthetician Robert Bernasconi has eliminated Heidegger’s writing from the aesthetic problems area. In his opinion, “Heidegger does not offer a philosophy of art in the familiar sense, so that it is far from easy to assess where he stands in relation to the standard debates. Nevertheless, for his followers this is the measure of his greatness as he was engaged in the overcoming of aesthetics” (Bernasconi R., 322, 2009). However, for the Russian aestheticians, Martin Heidegger was that philosopher, who said: “Language is the home of Being” and “The essence of Being exists only in the Arts”. This approach, in the Russian aesthetic tradition in the XX century, was called “ontological” and is completely suitable for our case.

We, Russian aestheticians, recognize the being in language as the universal mode of being in textual reality. Contemporary art is an extremely complex mode of being in the art world with its unordinary artworks and new unknowable and innumerable art languages. Each artist elaborates his own language. It seems non-stop process.

According to the Serbian aesthetician M. Shuvakovich, contemporary art in its actual forms, such as performance and installation, abandons traditional monomorphic artistic languages and no longer works exclusively in visual, auditory, volume-linear, or verbal images. Contemporary art is constantly experimenting on the synthesis of artistic languages. In this case, there is no rejection of the genre and specificity of art. In each form of art, the synthesis takes place on the basis of its dominant language to which elements of other artistic languages are organically added. In such a way, new polymorphic artistic languages as well as expressions are born because of such processes.

Since contemporary musical compositions include the everyday sounds, accompanied by demonstration of video art, during their execution the musicians can perform various actions out of which a musical concert is transformed into a musical performance.

Quite similar is the situation with a volume composition where everyday objects are arranged in a certain fashion. The moves and accompaniment of rhythmic sounds represent the expressive scale. All the forms, together, become a unity of kinetic sculpture.

Contemporary art education should also take into account not only the synthesis of languages in contemporary art, but also the fact that the key to the artist message is not in the text, but in the context, in which the art text exists.

Accordingly, the rule is not a specific individual author and the state of artistic consciousness in the society, for which one creates the product, not the language of a particular art form, within which to create the product, but the inner potential of the works translated into the languages of other arts. This feature of artwork is known as *intermediality*. Intermediality can be achieved by knowledge in the laws of other arts existence and their expressive visual language. This effect can be achieved in the intuitive communication process between representatives of different arts and in the process of working together on the creation and understanding of art. In this authors' opinion, it would be extremely useful to form this ability in the education process. This ability encompasses synesthetic perception of each product in the spectrum of sensory associations evoked by the different art languages and could be formed by students in the process of mastering the skills of synesthetic perception and synesthetic creation in art.

On the new stage of art history nowadays, the development of art languages is determined by such facts as the being, the social being and computer technologies. Manuel Castells highlights the role of electronic super highway created by computers where all art languages can be together in innumerable variants. Computer technology gives the artist the ability to create multiform and multilevel art worlds with complexes of sound-light-color-space and images, among others. Thus, artworks no longer exist only in the form of fine art as picture, concert or sculpture. They exist in the new integrative forms of contemporary art such as installation, performance, happening, and multimedia projects.

For the perception of multimedia art, knowledge of individual art languages and artistic expression is enough, but the process of creation of multi-linguistic polymorphic multimedia projects demands the abilities of new multi-sensory aesthetic forms of perception. Therefore, the contemporary artists' work involves the use of multimedia technologies that provide new opportunities for expression. The product demands the development of a new sensibility and programming capabilities to produce through perception an array of synesthetic effects which have their base on a new computerized synthesis of various art languages into one.

A multimedia installation, a composition of different sounds, graphics, color images and their sources, may include electronic musical instruments, technical devices, audio-video-reproducing, and computer equipment. Popular culture has developed this art form into widely acclaimed public shows such as the final “Eurovision” concert and the opening ceremonies of Olympic games. Together with complexes of art languages in electronic multimedia artworks, the new synesthetic imagination and perception abilities are deemed necessary for their authors and audience. Many scientists have called this new synesthetic imagination and perception a “new synesthetic sensibility”.

Another important factor changing the languages of the arts and embodying them in a new sensuality is the de-professionalization of the artistic sphere. This process became a reality in the second half of the XX century, when computer technology and the context radically changed the shape of art practices and literacy requirements for people, who create artworks with special artistic languages.

Classical artistic sensibility was embodied in the language of classical art too. It took a long time for writers, painters, composers, and architects, among others to learn the ability to record, the capability to capture the artistic content, to acquire knowledge of the elements of artistic language as essential parts of their professional skills. This explains why none of classical artworks could not exist except in the text form.

The new sensibility is embodied by the authors, who are not necessarily – professional, most authors – improvisers in the art, who is using the achievements of current computer technologies to create works of art using specific programs and technologies. These people are not engaged in creative work on the basis of knowledge of the languages of classical art and classical literacy. They improvise, using modern computer programs, and create their works in the public eye. In this situation the text loses its value, the artistic formation and existence becomes the main point.

Contemporary artworks are becoming more and more extra-textual and extra-verbal. Laws of improvisation and laws of communicating with large audiences have defined a new grammar of contemporary non-verbal art language. This grammar for the contemporary artist is in the rules of art simulation environment or situation of artistic communication, not only in the rules of the production of the text, which is reported in this communication sent by the author. In contemporary art, the most important factor is the intermedial, intertextual and intersubjective environment, where artistic projects are carried out. The way of penetration into this environment is the multilingualism of the contemporary artist, the ability to create and understand a work of art available in different languages or in the complex of languages, combining the languages of different arts. Current art education should teach quite so.

In the contemporary art of the late XX – early XXI century we observe the complex processes in different kinds of art that allows us to conclude that one of the trends in contemporary art is the synthesis of different art languages in artistic unity of artwork. It is clear that contemporary art is synesthetic. The essence and uniqueness of synesthetic sensuality is in ability to create and to percept the art work, where supersensible and super high-speed multimedia used for multi-sensual, multi-dimensional and multi-valued realization of art world. Today the language of each art form absorbs and synthesizes the languages of other arts, creating a new polymorphic language of artistic expression. It

incorporates various types of art, in various combinations and forms of existence: light painting, sound installations, moving images, "living pictures", kinetic sculpture and so on. Obviously, there is only one way to express the multidimensionality of the world and, of course, it assumes ability of multisensory of feeling and perception.

Our hypothesis consists in this sentence. Artistic and morphological synthesis exists now on the base of various combinations of classical art languages, and this synthesis allows develop such complex art morphological formations as the installation, heppining or performance. This feature morphological synthesis of art languages is leading to the birth of the combined polymorphic artistic languages, and is the reason that artistic education should seek to purposeful and consistent formation of synesthetic abilities of the artist – a professional in the field of art. It gives to art education new cases.

Let us consider the experience of the State educational institution of secondary professional education in the field of arts – Sverdlovsk Art College named after I. D. Shadr. This College was founded in 1902, and during last five year was used synesthetic learning methodology. The College currently provides learning in a huge range of specialties: easel painting and theater decorations, sculpture, graphic design and environmental design.

Noting synesthesia as an integral feature of contemporary art, we must understand that such art requires the artist who able to express the changing mosaic fluid world without losing the integrity of its perception. Accordingly, there arises the problem of how to teach a new model of artistic vision and expression for the art education system. That is, to teach artists to create in new synesthetic sensibility. The contemporary painter, for example, should be able to create a combined project such as theatrical decorations in which not only the traditional means of expression must work in such a project, chiefly color. Our student must make the associations between color and sound, light and video, and activate all the senses of the viewer, including tactile, olfactory and taste sensations as well as their interactions with each other. Using artistic synesthesia technology in art education defines the artist's commitment to the perception of the complex nature of different forms and art genres and their means of artistic expression. Future artists have to learn how to use the unique features of the new sensibility and super sensibility in their creations.

The formation of abilities of artistic synesthesia, while maintaining the integrity of consciousness, is built on the interaction of three interconnected stages in the process of art education in the Sverdlovsk's Art College. First, the learning of complex humanitarian disciplines (The Theory of Art, The History of Art, and The Philosophy of Culture) reveals their internal communication. Individual subsystems of culture and arts are analyzed through the identification of meaningful and expressive interactions in the courses *World Art Culture* and the *History of Art*. As a result, the students learn the History of Art through the discussion about the peculiarities of the artistic styles in different historical epochs. Discussions deal with the identification of similarities and differences in the artistic languages of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and literature of each cultural period. The idea is that deep understanding of the incarnation of the "dialectic of the soul" by expressive means of different art forms provides a basis for the intellectual comprehension of the originally syncretic nature of art.

In the curriculum, there is also interdisciplinary course “Pedagogical bases of teaching the creative disciplines” that includes “Pedagogy” and “Psychology”. The mechanisms of the creative consciousness (psychology) are connected with the methodology of development of the artist (pedagogy) in this course. This makes it possible, among other things, to educate not only the artist, but also the future teacher of media-art.

A technique initially tested in the Sverdlovsk Art College and then presented in a methodological manual published with examples of pupil’s creativity (Tapilina E., 2015) exemplifies what is done to achieve the above. For instance, the practical part of the courses is built in such a way that the student is able to detect the interaction of arts by picking up the picture to a piece of music what was made at the same time. Further development of this ability in the framework of practical training involves asking the students to draw a picture of himself based on the music they listen to, or to express their perception of their own poetry lines that were inspired by this music or painting.

Creative practice is a compulsory subject in the education system of the future artist. It is taught through the study of artworks in the city environment. Practice takes place usually in two stages: first in the student’s native town, and second in a historic town. In the report, the students give comparative analysis of art objects due to their positioning in the urban environment, in the context of the existence people who are living among artworks of the past and the present.

Finally, the creative work done by the students is considered separately in terms of their synesthetic components that should motivate the ability to co-sensation, interaction of senses, and the vision of one expressive form through another.

In conclusion, the technique for formation new artistic sensuality in art education consists in developing not only specific fine art language, but of all the languages of art as well as the combinations of art languages at the multimedia level of arts. This technique comprises 1) updating the syncretic morphological nature of art, 2) the cooperation of feelings at the different levels of their manifestations in the polymorphic languages artwork, 3) the formation of a specific, inherent to the artist, ability to see and understand art works in a complex synesthetic sensuality. This pedagogical technique corresponds to an actual educational trend aimed at making a real artistic environment for the students training during process of creative professional activity. It allows to achieve the educational purpose: to form sensual synesthesia ability in contemporary art education.

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